

THE PASSAGE FROM THE WORLD

day, he found her as merry and joyous as she had been of old when enduring the pains in her side. She stretched out her arms, tenderly embraced him, and again bade him depart. " But I, if I may speak with the Prophet, *deceived by the Lord*, decided to set out. I departed therefore ; but, after I had reached my convent at Siena, I was informed by a letter from one of her sons that, on that very day, not long after my departure, she had returned to the same state of inability to move body and limbs in which she had been before. Then, after a few days, as the *Legenda* telleth, she blissfully passed from this dying life and valley of tears to the long-desired, sweet embraces of her Bridegroom."¹

A few days after Bartolommeo had left, Sterano Maconi at last arrived in Rome. Catherine's last letter to him, half playfully bidding him come or she would get him no more indulgences, nor do anything else for him, and seeming surprised, perhaps a little hurt, at a report that he intended to become a monk (of which he had told her nothing), had given no hint of her approaching end ;² but he had heard of her plight from the others, and, while praying at night in great sorrow in the vaults under the Spedale, had heard a voice : " Go to Rome, for the time of thy dear mother's departure is at hand." It was now his office to write what seems to have been the last letter written in her name : " Write, my son Stefano," she said, " to Siena to Fra Bartolommeo, that the Lord is exercising His mercy upon me, and therefore let him, and all his companions in San Domenico, beseech the Bridegroom Jesus to suffer me to offer up my life, even to the shedding my blood for His glory, to illumine the face of the Church."⁸

The end came on April 29, the Sunday before the Ascension, after prolonged and continual suffering. A few hours before the dawn, all the spiritual family were summoned, and Giovanni Tantucci gave her the absolution, *a culpa et a poena*, for the

¹ *Processus*, coll. 1358-1361. ⁸ Letter 369 (263).

⁸ Barth. Senensis, *of. «'/.*, Lib. I. cap. II, 12. Cf. Augusta Drane, II. pp. 258-260.